

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 10, 2013

Agenda Item: Proposed addition to Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Preliminary Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks requested federal aid dollars in 2010 under USFWS ESA "Recovery Land Acquisition" HCP program to purchase interest in land for grizzly bear habitat and species protection. The grant is specific to assisting the recovery effort of the North Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) grizzly bear population. This proposal is to secure approximately 316 acres of land (Parcel B on the attached map) from "The Nature Conservancy" and "The Conservation Fund." This land is adjacent to the Blackleaf WMA and will become part of the WMA if/when FWP becomes the owner.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The department will write an environmental assessment, provide public review and comment for 30 days as well as the public opportunity to comment during the October Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis:

1. If the Commission decides not to allow FWP to pursue the purchase of this parcel adjacent to the Blackleaf Wildlife Management area. The HCP funds may be lost due to the 3 plus years since FWP received the award letter from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Aid section. The HCP funds are specific for assisting grizzly bear habitat protection and population recovery along the Rocky Mountain Front or other area within the NCDE.
2. FWP could pursue interest in another property that has important Grizzly bear habitat and would result in efforts for recovery of this population.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale.

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse the department's efforts to proceed in acquisition of this 316-acre parcel for the protection of critical grizzly bear habitat and for addition to the Blackleaf WMA. With the Commission's endorsement FWP would proceed in doing all due diligence and continue discussions with TNC and TCF. This parcel would enhance the recovery effort as well as adding to public access and recreational opportunity.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the Commission give preliminary approval for FWP to work on the 316-acre addition to Blackleaf WMA including negotiations, public review, and analysis.